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# Communities, abandonment and 'recognition': The case of post-state funding community bodies

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ABSTRACT

Communities have increasingly been internalised as subjects with responsibilities in the delivery of urban policy and involvement in broader urban governance. A prominent example is the English New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme that ran between 2001 and 2012. Towards the end of government funding, NDCs were required to develop succession strategies that would leave a 'legacy' for their communities. This involved the development of social enterprise bodies that would continue to support community involvement and regeneration efforts through ownership of capital assets, acquisition of public service contracts, and partnership working with mainstream service providers. This paper examines the influence of communities on post-NDC bodies, and the relationship between these organisations and local government, which was a critical agent in the management of the previous NDC bodies. The 'recognition' perspective of Honneth (1995), which is concerned with the self-actualisation of actors through inter-subjective relations based on forms of recognition (e.g. respect), is deployed in the analysis of post-NDC bodies. The paper concludes that long term community representatives' have incorporated market values as a means in which to acquire 'respect' from social enterprise professionals, and that there is a lack of recognition by state agents of the role of post-NDC bodies in contemporary urban governance.


## 1. Introduction

Governmentality and political economy accounts of neoliberalism emphasise the responsibilisation of community and voluntary sector bodies in urban policies (Cochrane, 2007; DeVerteuil, 2015). Such accounts have not tended to examine the transition from state-led bodies to post-state funded community-led social enterprises in any great detail, including their potential to circumvent or disrupt neoliberal tendencies (see Williams et al., 2014). New Labour's New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme is one such programme that sought to incorporate communities into state-led urban regeneration programmes, and has involved transition to independent social enterprises.

The NDC programme ran between 2001 and 2012, involved thirty-nine NDC partnerships operating in the poorest neighbourhoods in England, with a ten year life and an average budget of £50 m in which to reduce deprivation. They were designed to bring communities and service providers together within a territorially defined space but forming a 'scale' of governmental intervention and 'place' of communities. NDCs involved devolved responsibility to communities by ensuring they contributed to decision-making, and levering-in additional funding from the public and private sectors (SEU, 2001). With the end of Round one NDCs in 2011 and Round two in 2012, the parent government department - Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) - asked all partnerships to develop succession strategies to ensure a 'legacy' from the programme, but following strict guidance in which market-based 'social enterprise' entities were to be created to deliver these strategies (DCLG, 2008).

Resulting post-NDC organisations are charitable trust bodies, possessing one or more subsidiary registered companies for trading purposes, producing profits that go into the charity, and can broadly be defined as 'social enterprises', with revenues funding community activities. Government guidance outlined the activities that could be undertaken by these bodies, primarily relating to managing community assets and delivering competitively tendered public sector service contracts (DCLG, 2008). Building upon Clarke (2005), this represents neoliberal state 'abandonment' to the market, and thus broader networked spatial relations, as residents are considered 'active' in being able to compete in the market to generate profits for community regeneration, with the state believing they have been 'empowered' through the possession of assets and community resources (see DCLG, 2008).

Following Newman (2014), one cannot simply encapsulate this abandonment under a universal set of neoliberal and post-crisis

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austerity processes which are explained through macro neoliberal tendencies that produce 'hybrid' local arrangement, or the responsibilisation of communities through uncontested and homogenous forms of governmentality. Rather, it is a case of critically examining the uneven, incomplete and politicised processes constituting community participation in such post-state bodies and their relations with other actors in urban governance (see Spears et al., 2009). This leads to two major issues that are the focus of this paper. First, to what extent are the community representatives of post-NDCs able to influence these bodies? Second, are post-NDC bodies able to influence broader scalar local government actors that were the accountable body for NDCs and who impact on their territorial areas through public service provision?

Building upon an earlier study of NDCs by Perrons and Skyers (2003) that utilised Fraser's (2000) recognition-redistribution framework, this paper deploys Honneth's (1995) 'recognition' approach in understanding community influence. The approaches of both Fraser (2000) and Honneth (1995) examine identity politics and social (in)justice in an age of capitalism. However, while Fraser (2000) advocates the interdependence of (cultural intersubjective) recognition and redistribution (unequal capitalist economic relations), Honneth (1995) concentrates on recognition, arguing that conflicts over redistribution occur through struggles over (mis) recognition based on morality and intersubjective relations.

For Honneth (1995), 'recognition' in society is a basis for the ontological self-realisation of actors and social justice, with agents making moral claims for recognition as they need to be 'recognised in his dignity if he is to maintain a positive relation to himself' (Deranty and Renault, 2007: 97). Honneth (1995, 2007) identifies three normative elements that are the basis of moral identity claims and justice, and through which social injustices are addressed by way of struggle. Firstly, recognition through love and affection which underpins self-confidence and successful social autonomisation; secondly, through respect in which rights are bestowed through legal and moral means; and, finally, recognition of the achievements of actors which brings about self-esteem. When denied, actors struggle for recognition, with society viewed as sites of social struggle as groups compete, through different forms of recognition, around the value and moral configurations underpinning social institutions, and their actual social and cultural 'worth' (Kompridis, 2007).

Such an approach brings a more in-depth morality-based analysis of the (spatially orientated) intersubjective construction of actors (e.g. identities) and social relations (e.g. how they are viewed by others). One can see in such thinking the role of intersubjective social relations in producing space, which is embedded within 'relational' concepts of multi-dimensional and interrelated spatial relations (Allen and Cochrane, 2014). Therefore, through this recognition perspective we can problematize the role and influence of community representatives on post-NDCs and local government. More broadly, the paper argues that there needs to be greater onus on the performative deliberative practices producing (dis)agreement in urban governance, rather than simply treating the latter as a hegemonic neoliberal landscape. This requires greater sensitivity towards processes of intersubjective 'recognition', as well as the (spatially orientated) moral and ethical motives and argumentative critiques/justifications deployed in everyday deliberative practices by actors (see Barnett, 2013).

The focus of this study is on an analysis of 20 post-NDC bodies that agreed to be interviewed, representing 66.6% of all such organisations as of 2015 and spread across all English regions and various urban sites, and a breadth of deprivation levels (see Table 1 and Fig. 1).

In total, 42 interviews were conducted with directors and community representative chairpersons, representing two interviews at each post-NDC, which was followed by a further round of interviews with local government Board members. Community chairpersons were interviewed because they are the 'lead' community representative and typically possess a long historical association with their NDCs, as well as being embedded within the micropolitics of their local communities. The paper is therefore focused on the perceptions of these individuals, but where such perceptions are triangulated with the opinions of the directors and external local government stakeholders.

## 2. Community actors, the local state and recognition

### 2.1. Community influence, social enterprises and recognition

Post-NDCs and their predecessor were conceived in an age of neoliberal tendencies, manifest in reduced national welfare programmes and greater devolved responsibility to citizens to help themselves and their communities (Fuller and Geddes, 2008; Wallace, 2010). 'Active citizenship' and entrepreneurship, volunteerism and mutualism with other members of the community have all come to prominence, largely as a mechanism in which to justify state retrenchment, and embedded within an understanding that citizens fulfil civic 'duties' in order to be entitled to 'rights' (Dargan, 2009; Newman, 2014). There is a presumption of homogeneity, apolitical relations, self-regulation and consensus between community members in neoliberal thinking, framing them a cohesive actor in urban governance (Herbert, 2005). They are typically viewed as place-specific within the 'local', which is regarded as bounded and homogenous, and is thus a spatial site where cohesive and efficient social coordination can occur, in contrast to a nation state apparatus often defined as bureaucratic and inefficient (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013).

Of importance in such processes is the creation of citizen subjectivities based on participation, responsibilisation and 'professionalization', whereby residents are constituted as bureaucratic representatives of their communities (Bondi, 2005). This community 'professionalization' is at the heart of these social enterprise bodies, with their development taking place within the context of the UK Coalition government's 'localism' rhetoric, in which community bodies substitute retrenching state services (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). However, they ignore, in the same way as the NDC programme did before them, the heterogeneity of communities, and the politics characterising community bodies and their differing geographical relations (see DeFilippis, 2008).

With government providing no support to these bodies, there arises the critical issue of whether communities are able to influence the running of post-NDCs that are managed by social enterprise professionals (more broadly, see Spears et al., 2009). Relations between community representatives and social enterprise officers employed to manage post-NDCs are key to such processes. How their knowledge is valued and the extent to which there is institutional continuity in existing participatory arrangements, have been highlighted as critical factors for community influence in social enterprises (Eversole, 2011). In the case of the former, expert knowledge, stemming from broader geographical relations, still tends to be valued more than communities, which is often viewed as being place-specific (Purcell, 2006).

A critical issue found in many social enterprises is the relationship between market and social values, and such issues have the potential to significantly influence and distort the role of community representatives (Dart, 2004; Alter, 2006). For Spears et al. (2009), social enterprises have to mediate and balance the tension between maintaining revenues through competition in the (spatially networked) market, and remaining committed to social objectives within the 'place' of communities. Pharoah et al. (2004) and Pearce (2006) found that with a greater focus on